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finally, the "Ballade à Georges Rochegrosse" (no. 23), with its admonitory refrain: "Souviens-toi bien de cela, Georges," calls to mind the "Problème ou ballade au nom de la fortune," where the refrain runs: "Par mon conseil, prends tout en gre, Villon."

With Villon always as his model for form and Rabelais frequently his model for treatment,¹³ Banville has added his own distinctly original note in the composition of his *Trente-six ballades joyeuses*, thereby fulfilling his promise to "faire renaître la ballade ancienne dans une fille vivante et créer la ballade nouvelle."¹⁴ We have, in short, a composite very similar to that revealed in Banville's theatrical masterpiece, *Gringoire*, a work that was practically contemporaneous with the *Trente-six ballades joyeuses*.¹⁵

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CAUSALITY IN *SAMSON AGONISTES*

Samson Agonistes like *Paradise Lost* has given rise to fresh discussion. P. F. Baum¹ has presented a theory opposed to that of J. W. Tupper.² His procedure has been unusual in that he fails to name his modern opponent, who is a well-known authority on English drama, and for some reason he deems it wise to concentrate his disapproval on Samuel Johnson. Of late years, critics have been readjusting their views of the Great Cham, and finding after

¹³In the "Ballade de la sainte buverie," Banville refers to "maître François," and the refrain reads: "C'est Rabelais qui nous verse du vin."

¹⁴Cf. Avant-propos to the *Trente-six ballades nouvelles*.

¹⁵For a brief discussion of the Villon-Gringoire-Banville composite in the characterization of the hero of this play, cf. the introduction to the present writer's edition of *Gringoire*, New York, 1921, p. xxi. Some mention is also made there of Banville's indebtedness to Villon's "Építaphe en forme de ballade" in the composition of his "Ballade des pendus." Other ballads by Banville, outside of the "Trente-six," that show the obvious influence of Villon are the "Ballade de la vraie sagesse," the "Ballade aux célébrités du temps jadis" and the one whose refrain runs "Aux pauvres gens tout est peine et misère."

¹*PMLA.*, xxxv, 375-389.

²*PMLA.*, xxxvi, 354-371.

all that many of his opinions are practical and sensible. We must weigh carefully most of Johnson's dicta still, though we need not believe him infallible. We cannot reject a judgment merely because Johnson pronounced it. Especially ought we to act with caution when we consider his criticisms of drama. Though he does not appear to have had a most liberal attitude toward imaginative possibilities in plays, he did have an acquaintance with both classical and English drama that many a modern specialist might envy. He attempted unsuccessfully a classical play, *Irene*. He edited Shakspeare. He was intimately acquainted with Goldsmith and other playwrights of his time, and he was a conspicuous attendant at Garrick's theatre. His equipment was therefore ample. His intellectual acumen is unmistakeable. To-day we cannot afford cursorily to dismiss his judgment on so important and plain a matter as the question whether a play has a middle. Yet Dr. Baum has snubbed Johnson.

Johnson declared that *Samson Agonistes* lacks a middle. Aristotle and others have insisted that a play should have a middle. Professor Tupper has supported Johnson in finding that Milton's tragedy has no middle. Dr. Baum, however, declares that such is not its defect. Both he and Dr. Tupper feel great admiration for the work as literature. The present paper does not aim to point out the numerous astounding merits of the play, such as the emotional effect of the choruses, but to examine the views of the recent critics.

Dr. Baum asserts that *Samson Agonistes* is weak because it is "tame," because it lacks conflict: "the essence of tragic action is conflict." This is the Hegelian contention, the difficulty with which is that conflict is not the essence. In fact it depends for its value structurally and "spiritually" upon the principle of causality; it is a mode or aspect of causality. Though we may admit to tragedy a small element of chance, we must emphasize causal relations, whether we see them in human character, in human acts, or in interference by a superhuman power.³ Causal

³ Just as literature in the last hundred years has reacted toward scientific progress and philosophy, so the Greek drama of the fifth century B. C. reacted toward the advance in philosophy up to Socrates and Plato. The pre-Socratics engaged diligently in the study of causation, and advanced various theories as to the initial cause. They agreed that life bears an

motivation is familiar to students of the structure of plays and of short stories; Thomas Hardy, it will be remembered, has expressed a wish to see it applied more frequently and more strictly to novels. The steps of causation may be in immediate causal sequence, or may act independently but directly upon the catastrophe for a co-operative effect. The following diagram will make clear divergent methods of handling causation in plots. A combination of both is often employed.

- a) 1 > 2 > 3 > 4 > 5 (which may be catastrophe)
 1 >
 2 >
 b) 3 > 5 (which may be catastrophe)
 4 >

In *Samson Agonistes* Milton either followed causality or did not. To be dramatic as distinguished from spectacular or imaginative or inspiring, he as author would have to employ causal relations and to make them clear. That he did not do so, in either action or character, save briefly in the first episode that handles Manoa, is the view of Dr. Tupper. The plot, he believes, is stationary, and so essentially is the mood. The issue of causality Dr. Baum does not appreciate and face. He eludes it by speaking of a lack of improbability, by enforcing absence of conflict, by comparing the work with classical dramas, by declaring Milton's material intractable.

As to probability, the first item, Dr. Baum does not realize that it must be positive, not negative; the sequence, to be sure, is not always necessary, that is, fixed; two or more solutions may be possible from some premises. They must be such as we can deem possible and probable. Thus the solution of Manoa seems possible and probable up to Samson's decision; but the solution offered by Dalila is improbable, all the more because the solution of Manoa has been lost, and also in consequence of the fact that Samson has plainly been for a long time quite adverse to her. Not for the world would I lose the portrayal of Dalila, which is scarcely matched in literature. It is tremendously effective, but it is not

aspect which they called causation. (To what degree they were right has been debated by philosophers ever since.) Similarly the Greek tragic poets found the principle of causation essential to their dramas.

dramatic in this play. It would go well for an imaginary conversation or for a dramatic lyric, but it is not introduced to cause the catastrophe, through either deed or character, though it might have been made to do so. Likewise, the episode with Harapha does not contribute to the probability or the inevitability of the catastrophe. The giant is distinctly less interesting than Dalila; the employment of him brings about an anticlimax. He is cowardly, and therefore is unworthy of Samson; he is not valuable for emphasis near the end of the drama, because physical strength is not impressive or intellectual as Milton treats it here, is not so subtle or so spiritual as the episodes with Dalila and Manoa. Yet the Harapha episode might have been used to forward the action and effect the catastrophe.

Dr. Baum's second defense against the "Johnsonian shifts" is that the play lacks conflict. Conflict, as I have indicated, rests on the basis of causality. It is an admirable method of developing in an interesting fashion a series of dramatic scenes. But it is not so fundamental as causality.

His third apology for Milton relies on adducing instances from the Greek masters, whom he assumes without warrant Dr. Tupper has not read. He devotes considerable space to refreshing our acquaintance with the structural similarity between *Samson Agonistes* and the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. This is an unfortunate example for several reasons. In the first place, we cannot defend a modern drama which is complete in itself by comparing it with a drama which is an organic part of a trilogy. Aspects of the *Prometheus* might be quite different if we were able to know fully the details of the trilogy. Such is the situation for any critic today, whether or not Milton thought of the fact. In addition, the Greek drama is more organic than Dr. Baum indicates. The play seeks to establish as strongly as possible Prometheus' side in his controversy with Zeus. As it opens, it reveals the hero in woe. Kratos, who directs his enchainment, shows that Zeus is physically powerful; Hephaestus reinforces our idea of Zeus's might, because he does his work in spite of sympathy for Prometheus. The chorus, composed of the daughters of Oceanus, who is related to Prometheus by marriage, would comfort the afflicted rebel, but he is determined in his righteousness, and will admit no error (herein behaving unlike Samson). Oceanus then comes to

offer his relative practical aid. He finds, however, that he cannot do so, because the hero proves that Zeus will not relent. Thus the solution he suggests is not possible; it even might involve Oceanus also in trouble. By this episode, therefore, the final disaster is made more ominous, fearful, and certain. Next Io enters to reveal Zeus's injustice when the supreme deity does not hate, but favors. Her episode magnifies the danger of Prometheus' position, making it more awe-inspiring. In her, nevertheless, the hero sees hope, namely, the source of the agency that will bring about his release. (In this way the release in another play of the trilogy is in part motivated.) Moreover, Prometheus' prediction to Io of a marriage which will injure Zeus causes Hermes to come as a messenger from the despotic god, and finally Prometheus' refusal to answer Hermes' question about the marriage brings on with the close of the play a catastrophe of increased torture for the hero. By the episodes of Oceanus and Io the catastrophe of the play has been made more inevitable, more terrible, and because of them the audience will look forward to the next play in the trilogy. The principle of causality is far more apparent in *Prometheus Bound* than in *Samson Agonistes*.

The Libation-Bearers yields satisfactorily to an examination for causal relationship, and is moreover an organic part of a trilogy. *The Suppliants* is plainly motivated. Dr. Baum's other examples from the three tragic Greek masters may be similarly analyzed.

Yet we need not hesitate to admit that some Greek tragedies were weak in causation; but though they were weak dramatically, they were not of necessity weak as spectacles. *Samson Agonistes* is weak in the Harapha incident, which is a poor scene to witness. *The Persians* is not thus affected. Moreover, its theme has a broad basis, and appeals to many universal feelings. We can imagine plots different from that used, which should portray the prodigious reversal and downfall of a man seemingly secure of fortune. Aeschylus, however, chose a plot which in scene would contrast sharply with the spectators who would attend the production of his play at Athens and with the setting which nature afforded as background to the theatre. An audience composed of citizens who were not under the power of an insolent monarch looked in imagination at the sorrows which a society experienced in a distant realm. They had an intimate vision of the life at a court which

held its position to be supreme on earth. The Athenians witnessed not merely the fall of a man from fortune but the defeat of an empire. They saw the suffering of their enemies at a remote Persian palace, while from where they sat they could gaze off at will over land which led to the sea-shore. Just beyond neighboring hills on the horizon lay, as they knew, the gulf and the island of Salamis, and the site of their tremendous victory over the Persian multitudes, the site of the triumph of free citizens over an imperial navy. The contrasts were brilliantly effected. In themselves they suffice as a defense for the existence of the play. But they do not make the play dramatic in the true sense. The problem of motivation is different, and though it would be possible to defend the play on such ground, I do not need to go into the problem now. But *Samson Agonistes* does not consistently produce non-dramatic results so emotionally effective as those of *The Persians*.

Lastly, Dr. Baum defends *Samson Agonistes* by declaring that the material is obstinate, that it will not allow of dramatic treatment. This contention cannot be admitted. There are a number of possibilities whereby the play can be made causal and dramatic. One of these may appear a trifle obvious upon examination. Its effectiveness as poetry would depend upon Milton. I shall not change Milton's order of episodes, because I can secure causal motivation without further changes, and a climactic arrangement is another problem altogether, though easy of solution. The plot can be handled thus:

Have the Manoa episode bring about the catastrophe more clearly than it does now. Alter the episode of Dalila so that she goes indignantly to the Philistines in order to report Samson's attitude. Similarly make the Harapha episode causal. Then if desirable for absolute clarity, alter the messenger's report of the catastrophe. Suppose that a Philistine council is in session. Let Manoa appear before it, trying to get Samson released by ransom. While the council is inclining favorably to his plea, let Dalila come with her complaints and render the issue doubtful. Have the balance still sway indecisively up to the entrance of Harapha with additional reports of Samson's insolence. Let his news rouse the council to a denial of Manoa's plea (Manoa having left the presence in the meantime, however), and to a decision to humiliate Samson further.

Thus the catastrophe is motivated from beginning to end, and the material is not found intractable.

Examination of Dr. Baum's views, therefore, shows that several of them are untenable. For a play to have a middle, it must have causal motivation, such as *Samson Agonistes* lacks to a large degree. The want cannot be defended by an asseveration that something else is missing, to wit, conflict. Nor should ancient plays, especially if they are imperfect by the standards of Aristotle, be advanced to excuse defects in Milton, who was not forced by circumstances to write a play at all hazards, and who was familiar enough with Shakspeare, Jonson, and other Elizabethan dramatists to realize that they employed causality, even if he himself did not discover any necessity to do so in his own case. Moreover, the ancient examples that Dr. Baum has most emphasized he has not carefully studied as parts of trilogies or as units. Finally, we cannot allow the defense that Milton's material was intractable.

Dr. Baum has made interesting and sound observations as to the play, but he has not succeeded in ousting Dr. Tupper from his central position wherein he contends that the play lacks a middle, and that this defect is in marked degree the cause of our dissatisfaction with it as a drama.

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THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE, WOMEN PLEASED, AND LA FÉE URGELE: A STUDY IN THE TRANSFORMA- TION OF FOLK-LORE THEMES IN DRAMA

Fletcher: 1579-1625.—*Woman Pleased*.—" *Women Pleased* was, in all likelihood, wholly composed by Fletcher. The date of its first production on the stage has not been discovered."¹

Favart, Charles Simon: 1710-1792.—*La Fée Urgele*.—"The title-page says: "Représentée devant Leurs Majestés, par les Comédiens Italiens ordinaires du Roi, à Fontainebleau, le 26 Octobre 1765. Et à Paris le 4 Décembre suivant."

The date of publishing of the copy used, as given at the foot of the title-page, was 1765.

¹ Dyce's edition, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, London, 1844: Vol. 7, p. 3.